Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.
Editor: Michael P. Birks, 36 Trevor Road, Flixton, URMSTON, Manchester M41 5QH. England. 0161-747 5924.

Vol.III, No.59 April 1995

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The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society,** the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription from the Secretary, Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. Subscription is currently £8 in Europe or $20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling of US$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/$54 and a five year subscription of £30/$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £5 in Europe or £7 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 061-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/$1.50 each, although issues 1-20 inclusive can be purchased for £10/$20 complete. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent the the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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Vol.III, No.59 **April 1995**

EDITORIAL

You may recall in my last Editorial I mentioned that the group had taken a table at MIDPEX. G.B. members will find enclosed with this issue a leaflet giving details of this event, and I very much look forward to meeting as many of you as possible on that occasion. The 30 dealers who are coming have all been informed of the Specialist Societies present, so presumably if they have any Latin American material they will be bringing it along. The date is **Saturday 10 June 1995**.

Before that will be another of Brian's auctions at Peterborough, at the usual venue of the Great Northern Hotel in Peterborough. The date is **Saturday 20 May 1995**. If you do not receive Brian's auction catalogues, his address is on the inside front cover.

The next meeting of the Central American group will be devoted to Maritime philately. Please note that this meeting will be held at a new venue, The Union Jack Club, in Waterloo, London SE12. Further details and the exact whereabouts of this venue will appear in our next issue. The date is **Saturday 30 September 1995**. The Spanish Main are also meeting at this venue on **Saturday 2 December 1995**, but no details are as yet available.

Cécile Gruson very kindly sent me a list of award winners at a recent US show which she attended. I have to admit I am unable to find the list and will have to ask her to send me another. However in the meantime our congratulations go to all those who won awards and my apologies to Cécile - could I have another list please?

And finally I am, sadly, back at work with the rest of the teaching depression. If your letter to me will not go through my letter box, or needs a receipt, please send it to my school because the postman always arrives after I have left and Parcel Farce, sorry Parcel Force, especially make it difficult to have your parcel redelivered.

mpb

THE JOYS OF MODERN NICARAGUA!

by MICHAEL P BIRKS FRPS,L

As many of you already know the last twenty-four years of my life have been spent in the fruitless pursuit of job satisfaction as a member of the teaching depression. One of the few positive aspects of this is my ability to stand up in front of a group of people and talk; a prospect which frightens some people to distraction. Coupled with a love of stamps I very much enjoy giving displays to philatelic societies throughout the north of England and often further.

At one such display recently I was exhibiting my collection of revolution-related material the second half of which chronicles the effect of the '79 revolution on the philately and stamp issuing policy of the Nicaraguan Post Office. Out of the blue came the question "Why do you collect these new issues?". Now it takes a lot to throw me because I have 'heard it all before' and usually have an answer, but not on this occasion. The more I thought about it the more I could think of reasons why *not* to collect these issues.

I cannot say that I spend a vast sum on New Issues, although it does gall me that when there is a difficulty New Issue dealers invariably fail and you are left to build your own collection by whatever means you can. This happened in the early 1980's when I had to wait for Year of the Child and Olympic collections to be broken up to obtain the stamps I needed. And at what a price! So here was a very good reason for stopping in 1979. (A collector with much more sense than me stops in 1962, after 100 years of adhesives.)

For me one of the beauties of collecting Nicaragua is the, what appears to be, in-built chaos which has pervaded the country for centuries. This leads to political and fiscal chaos, rampant inflation and problems with providing sufficient stamps of the right values. It is hardly surprising that keeping the philatelic world informed is not foremost on the mind of the Postmaster General of Nicaragua. As a consequence of this Gibbons are literally years behind with their listing of these stamps. So all these beautifully produced (yes, I jest) stamps lie in stockbooks waiting for the day of resurrection when Gibbons will reveal all - such as when they were issued and what they depict.

But that is only the half of it. How do you get the used stamps? Or even worse covers with these stamps on? For me philately is not about buying mint stamps, it is the accumulation of beautifully used stamps both on and off cover with, hopefully, a smattering of postal markings of one sort or another. I know from on-the-spot-reports of Mancunians who have visited the Mosquito Coast that throughout most of the 80's it was more often than not the case that many values of each set were never available, not having been supplied by the Nicaraguan Post Office.

Inflation certainly seems to have been the root of all evil as far as the Nicaraguan Post Office of the 80's is concerned. It seems that, as in Germany in the 1920's, the rate was changing so quickly that supplies of postage stamps could not keep pace. Of course this is one of the consequences of not having a definitive set of small values which could be used as 'make-ups'.

Late in 1982 the following notice appeared in "La Gaceta" the official publication of the ruling junta.

INSTITUTO NICARAGUENSE DE TELECOMUNICACIONES Y CORREOS
(TELCOR)

COMUNICADO

El Director General del Instituto Nicaragüense de Telecomunicaciones y Correos en uso de las facultades que le confiere el Inciso f) del Artículo 3 del Decreto número 1053 de 5 de Mayo de 1982 publicado en "La Gaceta", Diario Oficial No. 137 del 12 de Mayo de 1982.

RESUELVE

1.- Que en virtud de la actual transformación de signo monetario que se está dando en nuestro país y de la expresión tarifaria del Servicio Postal en este nuevo signo monetario, el Servicio de Correos emitirá nuevos sellos postales acordes al nuevo Córdoba Oro en que está expresada su tarifa.

2.- Mientras dure el proceso de emisión de estos nuevos sellos, el Correo utilizará la modalidad de Franqueo de sellado con la impresión "Franqueo Pagado", según lo autoriza el Inciso d) del Artículo 28 del Convenio Postal Universal suscrito por nuestro país en el Congreso de Hamburgo de 1984.

3. Para dar garantía a nuestros usuarios del entero de su importe por el pago del Servicio Postal y de la seguridad de su envío, todas las ventanillas de Correo están en la obligación de entregar un recibo numerado igual al Franqueo Pagado.

INGENIERO
PABLO VIGIL ICAZA
DIRECTOR GENERAL
TELCOR

A translation would be as follows;

NOTICE

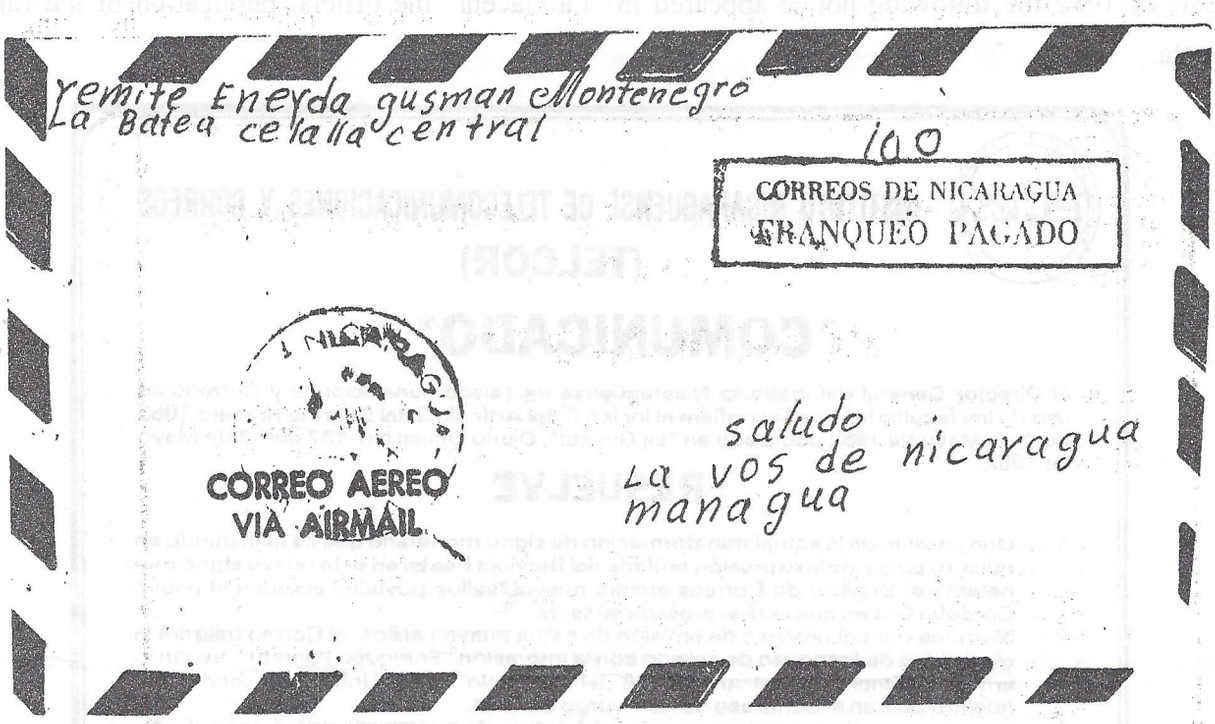
"The Director General of the Nicaraguan Post Office, pursuant to Section f), Article 3 of Decree N^{O}.1053 of 5 May 1982, published in 'La Gaceta', the Official Diary, N^{O}.137 of 12 May 1982;

RESOLVED

1. - That during the revaluation of our currency, which our country needs, and the revision of postal rates in the new currency, the postal service will issue new postage stamps as soon as possible.
2. - Pending the issue of new stamps, the Post Office will use a handstamp inscribed 'Franqueo Pagado' as authorised in Section d) of article 28 of the UPU Convention signed by our Government at the Hamburg Congress in 1984.
3. - In order to guarantee to our customers that the postage has been paid and the mail is secure, all sellers of postage are required to give a receipt equal to the Postage Paid.

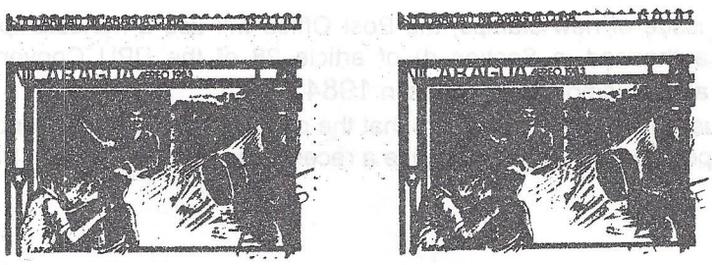
Ingeniero
PABLO VIGIL ICAZA
Director General
TELCOR."

I have tried to acquire examples of this handstamp, which must be fairly common. but to date have only managed to acquire one, which I illustrate below (La Vos de Nicaragua, is a radio station in Managua). This particular example, although identical with the handstamp described above, was in fact used much later. A similar situation arose between July 1990 and 25 April 1991, when the existing Cordoba was replaced with the Cordoba Oro, originally on a par with the US dollar.



This cover, posted locally in 1991, bears a manuscript "100" indicating a postage paid of 100 Cordobas. So, even in the large cities there were times when there were no adhesives to be had. I have yet to see this handstamp on a cover overseas. Stamps had been received from the Cuban printers, but of course being in the "old" Cordobas, could not be put on sale. The subjects of these stamps were ships, football, winter Olympic games, summer Olympic games and mushrooms.

Unfortunately I have never come across any varieties on modern stamps. J A van Rijn of Amsterdam, has sent me an illustration of the 3 Cordoba stamps declaring solidarity with Cuba (did they get a discount for these stamps?) issued in 1983. He has found two mis-perforated copies of this stamp amongst sixty-five cancelled to order copies.



For those of you with Gibbons Part 15 (the deserted ones), your listing ends in 1983, but then you don't need me to tell you that! Some progress can be made through the catalogue supplement of GSM, which brings us up to 12 October 1989 with SG 3070, 2,000 Cor. Pre-Colombian artifacts. In view of the difficulties we are facing Derek Pocock has sent a listing of stamps c1989 from Australia's Stamp News. They are up to the same point as Gibbons but Derek promises to send further supplements and so I shall publish them as I receive them. He feels, and I agree with him, that we should list the new issues of Nicaragua as and when we can get any information until the catalogues are up to date. Presumably one day they will be!

In an attempt to find out just what was happening with the more recent issues I wrote to a collector in Nicaragua, Aldo Knoepffler, having seen his address published, and he very kindly furnished me with a copy of a letter he had written in response to a similar request a little earlier. I reproduce it here.

"With regard to the 1990, 1991, 1992 issues of Stamps of Nicaragua and their first day of issue, here is what I know about them.

After several meetings with the Postmaster and lesser officials of TELCOR, it has been impossible to find out the exact date of issue. They claim complete ignorance I believe they just do not want to say anything about this matter. Why? I don't know. The communists have strange ways of running things.

The last stamps to be issued in 1989 were Scott 1780 issued in July 1989 for regular mail and C1196 in October 1989 for air mail. In July 1990 according to 'Communicado' of Telcor, published in a local paper and with no date, stamps were no longer used in Nicaragua until April 25, 1991. I enclose a copy of the document.

The Scott catalogue of 1993 lists Nos. 1781 to 1812 and C1197 to C1203. These stamps were never issued and never used for postage. These stamps were ordered from the Cuban printers and arrived in Nicaragua AFTER the currency reform that changed the old Cordoba to the new Cordoba Oro on March 4, 1990. The stamps were printed with the old currency worth 15 million Cordobas to one US$. The Cordoba Oro was at par with the dollar.

New issues.- All are in the new currency.

On April 25, 1991	Expo New Zealand. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	FAO 45th Anniversary. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	Flower type. 16 stamps.
	Dr Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, 1 stamp
Between June 91 and Oct. 21, 91.	Trains. 7 stamps and two S.S.
	Orchids. 7 stamps and one S.S.
Between Oct. 21, 91 and Apr. 21, 92.	Reforestation. Sheetlet of 20 stamps.
	Philanippon. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	America. 1 stamp.
	Pintura Infantil (Rafaela Herrera) 1 stamp.
	Pajaros. 7 stamps and two S.S.

	Van Gogh. [the well known Nicaraguan painter Ed] 7 stamps and one S.S.
	700 años Confederacion Helvetica. 1 stamp.
	Banco Centroamericano de Integracion. 1 stamp.
Between Apr. 21, 92 and Nov 18, 92.	Artesania Contemporanea. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	America (UPAE). 1 stamp.
	Pintura contemporanea. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	Albertville 92. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	Barcelona. 92. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	Concurso fotografico. 1 stamp.
	Padre Fabreto. 1 stamp.
	Ecologia. Salvemos el bosque. One sheetlet of sixteen stamps.
	Pintura infantil, Telcor 91. 1 stamp.
Between Nov 18, 92 and Jan 29, 93	Mariposas. 7 stamps and one S.S.
	Ganadores Italia 90. 7 stamps and one S.S.

With the exception of the first four issues in the list, the dates mentioned are the dates that I purchased the stamps at the philatelic office in Managua.

If I find out anything new on this subject I will let you know.

Sincerely

Aldo Knoepffler"

We very much look forward to that!

I do feel that perhaps collecting modern Nicaragua is like banging your head on a brick wall - it's nice when you stop!

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SOME CENTRAL AMERICAN PREPHILATELIC PARAPHERNALIA

Leo J Harris, the author, writes;

"There was an error in my transcription of the way bill on page 339.

These letters mean "F" postage paid, "S" single letter, "D" double letter, "E" parcels, "I" printed matter, and "T" totals."

Cécile Gruson writes;

"The 1866 waybill confirms the above [corrections] with "SENC" (sencilla = single) "DOBL" (doble = double). The money entrusted to the courier was to cover his expenses (food, fodder for mounts, dugouts to cross rivers, etc.).

THE "S.A.R." POSTMARK OF COSTA RICA

by DR RICHARD H SAUNDRY

I have in my collection of Costa Rican registered covers an envelope postmarked "S.A.R.". This postmark has always intrigued me. I often thought of ascertaining the exact reason for these initials, but as with much of my chaotic philatelic activities I always found some excuse for putting off my enquiries till some more convenient time - that is, until now. What prompted me to ponder again the meaning of the S.A.R. marking was that recently I received a list of Costa Rican postal history items from a British dealer which included details of an additional "S.A.R." cover, and then in Brian Moorhouse's private treaty list I noticed a third "S.A.R." cover which I subsequently acquired. These three covers date from the early 1920s and I guess the postmark saw limited use. Until the two covers were offered for sale this year I had not encountered any "S.A.R." cover other than the example which I had earlier acquired. I have no idea of the true scarcity of such "S.A.R." markings but think that they are relatively uncommon. It is possible, however, that there may well be quite a number of similar examples nestling in other Costa Rican collections and that previously no-one seems to have remarked upon them - if so I am hoping our readers will be able to use examples they have to either confirm or demolish the argument behind what follows.

First, the three covers I know about:

(1) An attractive multicoloured franking on a registered cover to Australia (Fig. 1). Sent 26 June 1920. Arrived Sydney 11 August with appropriate US transit markings. Total franking of 45 ctmos (10 x SG 79, pair SG 78, single SG 77).

(2) Registered cover from San Jose to Vienna. Sent 8 July 1920. Total franking of 30 ctmos (SG 81, 82).

(3) Registered cover from San Jose to Switzerland. (Fig.2) Sent 22 December 1922. Arrived 11 January 1923. Total franking of 40 ctmos (two pairs of SG 81)

What can we deduce from these three covers?

(a) The postmark is struck in the same colour as the relevant cancellation and registration postmarks so beyond doubt the "S.A.R." postmarks are post office applied and not of private origin.

Figure 1

(b) All three examples are on registered covers, all to foreign addresses. Most collectors will be familiar with the A.R. system. Briefly this is a postal service offered additional to registration where for an additional fee the sender will be notified through the Post Office that a registered letter has been delivered to the addressee. A.R. stands for "Avis de Reception" (French, the international language adopted by the UPU), or "Aviso de Recepcion" (Spanish), or "Acknowledgment of Receipt" (English). Most countries use/have used specific "A.R." markings (probably mandatory after the question of the A.R. system was raised at the PUC of 1890 when all member countries agreed to introduce the system by March the following year). Costa Rica used a variety of "A.R." marks both before and after the putative period of use (1920-23) of the "S.A.R." postmark. As far as I can tell there was no period of overlap of use of the "S.A.R " with any "A.R." postmarks. Since, however, both types of mark are sufficiently scarce I clearly do not have sufficient covers to claim with absolute certainty that the "S.A.R" marking was not used contemporaneously with any of the "A.R." markings. In the absence of contrary data it is very tempting to surmise that "S.A.R." is just another in the chronological series of "A.R." markings that were used, in which case I anticipate "S.A.R." should stand for "Servicio Aviso de Recepcion". This is what I believe "S.A.R." must stand for.

(c) There is however an alternative explanation for what the initials mean. It is claimed in some quarters that "S.A.R." stands for "Sin Aviso de Recepcion". In other words it was used to indicate a particular letter was to be treated as a registered letter only, and not as an "A.R." item. I think this explanation is unlikely. Why have a special postmark to tell postal officials that the letter was not "A.R."? After all, as far as I know, no other country seems to have ever used a "Sin Aviso de Recepcion" mark, so why should Costa Rica have dreamt up such a convoluted system. There were always far more registered items circulating in the mails than registry - AR, so it would appear to me to be much more logical to use a special postmark to alert an unsuspecting postal official that a particular missive was to be treated as "A.R.", rather than the other way round.

(d) Since "A.R." service always commanded a higher tariff if the "S.A.R." covers received "A.R." treatment this should be should be evident from the postal rates charged. The two 1920 covers were sent to foreign destinations at a time when the foreign first class letter rate (1917-1921) was 15 ctmos. and the prevailing registry and "A.R." rates were 10 and 5 ctmos respectively. Thus in 1920 single rate registered or "A.R" letters should have been charged 25 and 30 ctmos respectively, and corresponding double weight covers charged 40 and 45 ctmos. This suggests to me that frankings on the letters to Australia (45 ctmos) and to Vienna (30 ctmos) were appropriate for double and single weight "A.R." letters.

Figure 2

From 1 December 1921 Costa Rica implemented the provisions of the UPAE and at the same time increased the foreign (to non-UPAE destinations) first class letter rate to 20 ctmos. Now we begin to see my problem. It is my cover sent to Switzerland in 1922, rated at 40 ctmos that does not neatly fit into my cosy theory that the "S.A.R." mark served to denote Servicio Aviso de Recepcion". I think it possible this is a single rate cover rated at 20 ctmos, if the registry rate after 1921 was set at 15 ctmos, and the "A.R. rate 5 ctmos. Costa Rican postal rates for this period are a bit of a mystery and I am desperate for a number of different reasons for someone to tell me what they should have been. If the 40 ctmos rate is as I have worked it out to be then I can make a clear case for the meaning of "S.A.R.", but if the 40 ctmos rate is not that of an "A.R." cover then the meaning of the initials must remain an open question.

Can anyone add further comments to my line of reasoning, please?

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

AIRMAIL FROM GUATEMALA TO HAITI

Cécile Gruson writes;

"[In] Richard Saundry's article, the total franking of 27c per 10g was correct for airnmail (regular postage 3c, airmail surtax 23c, reconstruction tax 1c), and the despatch datestamp was that used for airmail. I agree that the 20+ days between despatch and arrival and Puntarenas transit stamp indicate that it probably went surface mail at least part of the way. Mr Saundry might like to note that the Pto Barrios to Miami route was only opened in **December 1931,** so that the Miami routing was not yet available when the letter was sent. In July 1935, mail despatches for Haiti were made up once a week, leaving on Sunday, and required three days in tansit via Miami.

On the other hand, the southbound airmail route between Guatemala and Panama and intermediate points was opened in **March 1930** and was therefore available to San José at that time. Transit time was 1 day in 1935 and probably earlier, as the first flights did not require more, which tallies with the Guatemala March 12 and San Jose 13 markings. The non-airmail San José transit mark is found on other airmail items. Prior to December 1, 1931, there was only one southbound airmail departure per week so it could be that the letter was docketed March 7 and stamps on the reverse of the cover not cancelled then (this happened fairly often), but only on 12th when the despatch was being prepared. Once in San José one of the frequent accidents or incidents of those days happened that required further transport by surface mail, explaining the Puntarenas marking. I do not have any precise documentation, but know that problems on most lines were frequent because airfields were little more than meadows and aircraft spare parts had to be flown in when mechnical problems occurred. Finally it could be a routing error, if the usual itinerary for Haiti was on the northbound route then (via Brownsville,TX). The error was discovered in Costa Rica, and the letter sent on by surface mail as there was no other way or the airmail postage was not sufficient to have it re-routed by airmail. All of this is little more than conjecture but offered for what it is worth."

THE 1891-2 "BOGRAN" ISSUE OF HONDURAS

Our July 1994 issue featured an article by Richard Washburn on the 1891-2 "Bogran" issue of Honduras. In response to this I received a copy of a sheet of the 10p value with inverted centre. This is the only recorded sheet of the invert on watermarked bond paper. The imprint reads "WM. CRANE & CO., DALTON, MASS. 1889 BOND No.21". We illustrate this sheet on the back page.

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GUATEMALA RAILWAY BOND STAMPS

I have had a letter from Martin Spufford of New Zealand regarding these stamps In it he asks;

"I am doing a sheet reconstruction of each value [SG97-114]. I have most of the listed varieties so am looking for the 'ordinaries' in any quantity. There is always a set in every run-through collection of Guatemala." [I shall be pleased to forward your letters, as always - Ed.]

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THE MEXICAN HIDALGO ISSUE OF 1874-1883

Also from Martin Spufford;

"My other speciality is the 1874-1883 Mexican Hidalgo Issue SG97-114. I do this in great detail and so if [anyone] has anything [of this issue] I would be pleased to go through it and return what I don't want with my cheque."

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

SOME UNIDENTIFIED POSTMARKS

Martin also sends some postmarks which he hopes readers will be able to cast some light on. I suspect No.9 is "Panama Transit" rather than "Greytown" as the first letter of the name is straight not curved.

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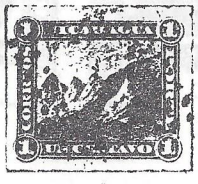
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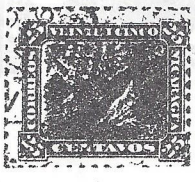

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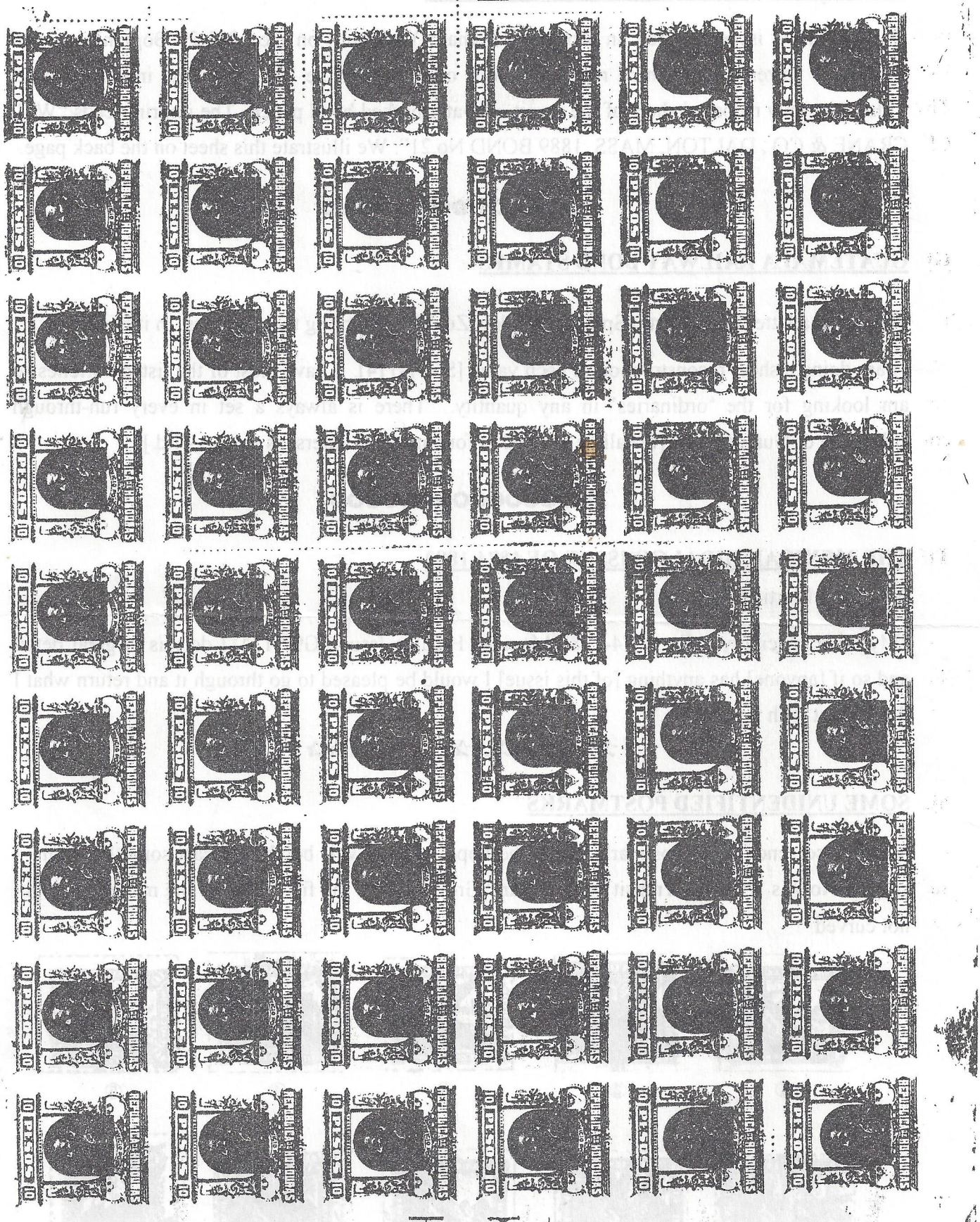
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